

# 2023 Annual Report for the 2022-2027 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

## *Lower Savannah Region*

The purpose of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is to encourage the development of a diverse economy in the region while recognizing the need to maintain a balance between attracting new investments, supporting existing businesses, fostering local entrepreneurship, and strengthening the region's key industries. This will enhance the region's quality of life by identifying and promoting projects for funding that strengthen the regional economy leading to the creation of more jobs.

To keep the CEDS relevant and a key component in maintaining a robust economy, it is a living document that is adjusted annually. In April 2023, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) recommended four new or updated topics for inclusion in future CEDS, climate resilience, equity, workforce development, and broadband. Although we feel the CEDS strategy is still sound and aligned with the needs of the region, we are updating the language to highlight the emerging and evolving topics in economic development.

### **Climate Resilience**

Climate resilience is the ability to recover from, mitigate the vulnerability, and adapt to changing patterns and hazards due to global warming and the changing climate. As the planet warms, weather and natural disasters will become more frequent and severe. Every county in the Lower Savannah region has a hazard mitigation plan that works to minimize the impact of hazards on people and the built environment. Each municipality also adopts the hazard mitigation plan of their county. The changing patterns and hazards due to global warming will continually be evaluated through hazard mitigation plans and regular assessments to ensure people, built environment, and investments are protected, so the economic development will be climate resilient.

### **Equity**

Equity is the quality or ideal of being impartial and fair. Equity will be incorporated into future CEDS as an overall theme and specifically in workforce development to ensure all barriers that prevent fair participation in education and job training programs are identified and eliminated. Equity in workforce development gives everyone the optimal opportunity to thrive by developing job skills and increasing employability, which stimulates long-term economic growth.

### **Workforce Development**

Employer-driven, place-based, and equitable workforce development is a focus of the Lower Savannah region CEDS. The workforce development and education goals in the action plan will be updated:

**Goal 1:** Connect and align education and workforce development programs to develop the region's current and future talent to create an employer-driven, place-based, and equitable workforce.

Objective 1.1 Expand options for high school students to become industry certified while still in high school to obtain stackable credentials

Objective 1.2 Integrate education, training, and workforce development to develop a strong workforce supply chain

Objective 1.3 Support efforts by Aiken Technical College, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, Denmark Technical College, USC-Aiken, USC- Salk, Voorhees College, Claflin University, and SC State University to expand education programs that correspond to employer needs and create a marketing strategy to promote enrollment

Objective 1.4 Support the creation of education and training programs responsive to current and future industry trends.

Objective 1.5 Support the creation and expansion of internships and job training programs with employers that lead to full-time employment.

## **Goal 2: Expand access to education and training programs**

Objective 2.1 Support the creation of online and distance learning programs for students that cannot attain necessary training in the traditional classroom setting.

Objective 2.2 Identify and eliminate any other barriers to workforce development programs.

## **Broadband**

South Carolina continues to make significant strides in expanding broadband to unserved housing units in the state. The SC Broadband Office has initiated a strategic planning phase through the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) grant program funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Job Act (IIJA) where a 5-year Broadband plan must be developed and submitted to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

The 'I Need Internet' survey was developed to gather information from citizens on their desire to obtain residential high-speed Broadband plans from Internet Service Providers (ISP). The data collected through the survey assists the SC Office of Regulatory Staff in determining the demand for and promote access to residential high-speed, fiber-based internet. The 'Better-Internet' Survey through Get Connected SC was also developed to determine the under served communities that desire to obtain more reliable internet access.

The data compiled from these surveys provides the data necessary to promote the unserved and underserved communities to ISPs. ISPs and other stakeholders have access to multiple federal and state investment programs that supplement the initial investment of installing broadband in a community.

The expansion of broadband infrastructure into rural areas will lead to economic growth in those areas.

**2022 Year in Review**  
September 30, 2022

**Served and Unserved Areas**

- Speed Tiers (download / upload)**
- ≥ 100 Mbps / 100 Mbps (symmetric)
  - ≥ 100 Mbps / 70 Mbps
  - ≥ 25 Mbps / 3 Mbps

**Unserved Housing Units**

- 100 or More
- 26 - 99
- 11 - 25
- 1 - 10
- Zero

**Best Available Technology**

- Fiber | Speeds ≥ 100 Mbps/100 Mbps (symmetric)
- Cable (DOCSIS 3.1+) | Speeds ≥ 100 Mbps/100 Mbps
- Cable (DOCSIS 3.0) | Speeds ≥ 100 Mbps/20 Mbps
- Cable (DOCSIS = 2.0, All Other) | Speeds ≥ 25 Mbps/3 Mbps
- VDSL (Fiber-to-the-Curb) | Speeds ≥ 10 Mbps/1 Mbps
- ADSL2, ADSL2+ | Speeds ≥ 8 Mbps/1 Mbps
- Fixed Wireless | Speeds ≥ 10 Mbps/1 Mbps
- ADSL, all other Copper | Speeds ≥ 3 Mbps/768 kbps
- No internet Service Available

**Data 2021:** Based on SC Broadband Office (SCBBO) analysis of FCC Form 477, Dec. 31, 2020 (pub. Oct. 29, 2021). In addition, multiple internet service providers (ISPs) reported their Form 477 data for 2021. Data is reported and analyzed on the basis of census tracts. Demographic data based on US Census 2010 information that was combined with IP geolocation information through Jan. 30, 2022. County-level and household-level data from Jan. 1, 2019 through Jan. 30, 2022 combined for analysis in this report.

**Data 2022:** Based on SCBBO analysis of FCC Form 477, Dec. 31, 2021 (pub. Dec. 29, 2022). In addition, multiple ISPs reported their FCC Form 477, Jan. 30, 2022 data to be merged and updated to the base dataset. Demographic data based on FCC Broadband Serviceable Locations as of Dec. 2022. Speeds for agencies data from Jan. 1, 2019 through Sep. 30, 2022 combined for analysis in this report.

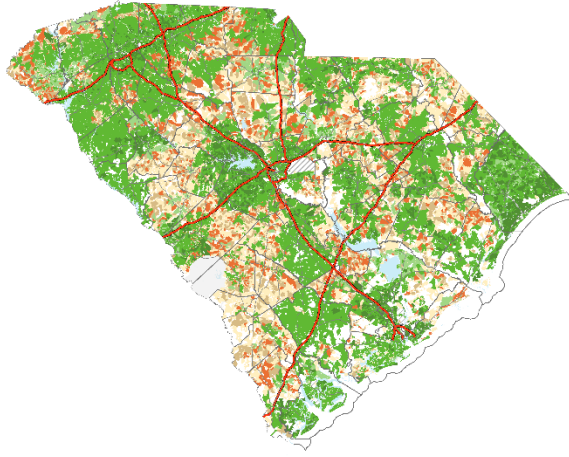
Note: all broadband services excluded.

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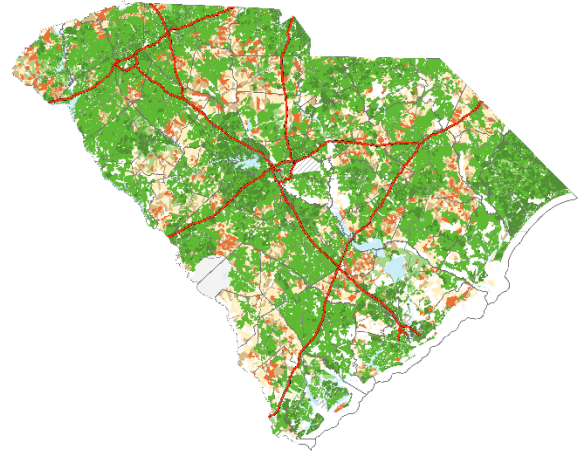
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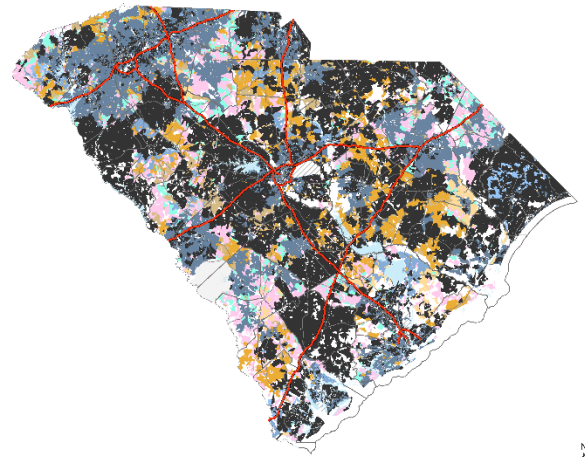
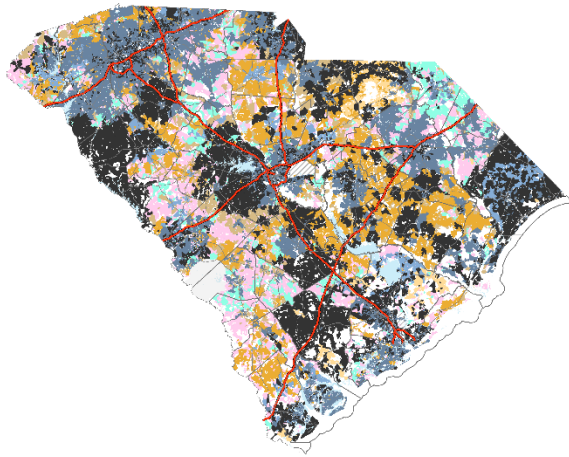
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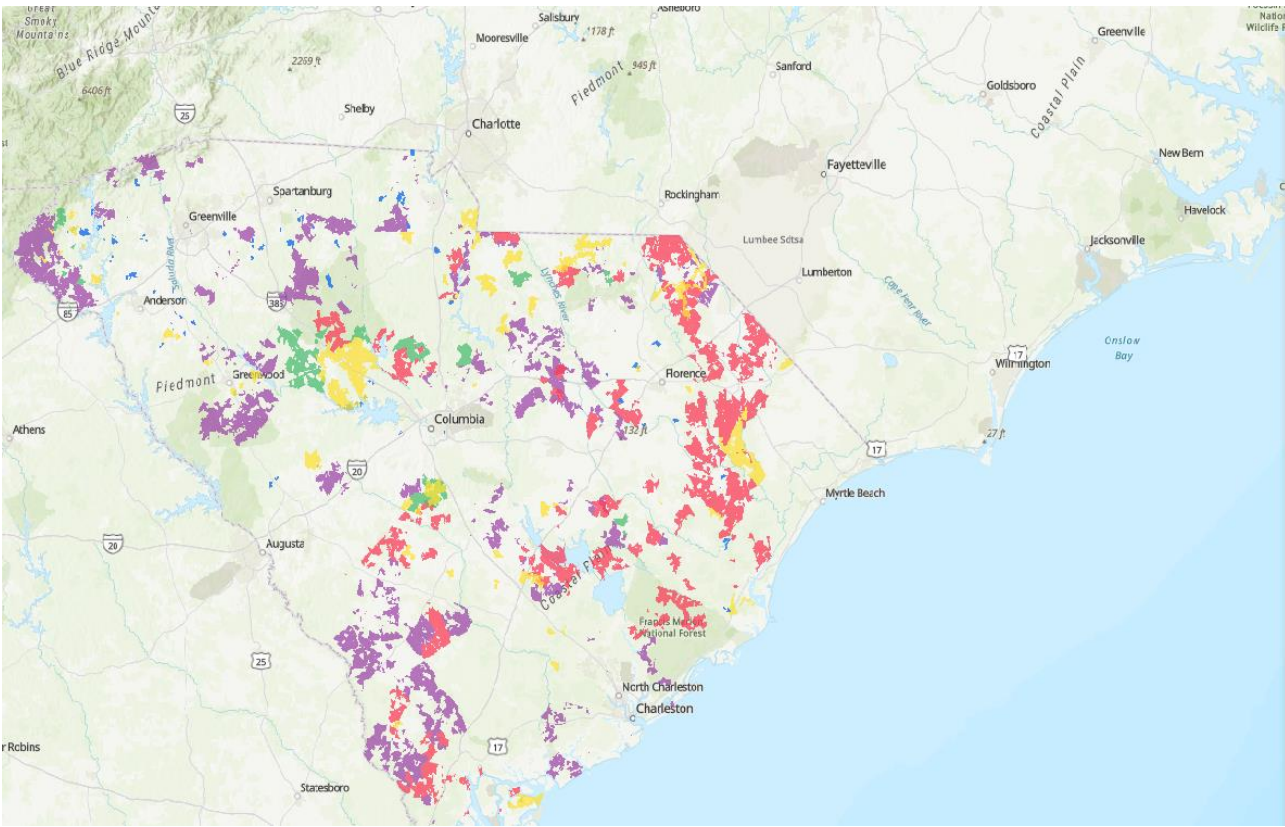


September 2021



September 2022





- Cares I
- Cares II
- Last Mile Grant Program
- Rural Broadband Grant Program
- ARPA 1.0 SLFRF